

# **Modi's Kashmir Policy: The Probable Consequence for the Security of South Asia**

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## **Abstract**

*India's decision to pursue an aggressive foreign policy to subdue Pakistan and its tactic to implement such policy entails a perilous course of action. The dangerous brinksmanship between the states since the last two years along the Line of Control (LoC) and the Working Boundary could lead to disastrous consequences. The US's ever increasing cooperation with India and its lukewarm response to Islamabad's call, is yet another factor, which encourages New Delhi to adopt an offensive behaviour towards Pakistan. Modi's Kashmir policy has resulted in failure, causing despondency among the people of the Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK). Modi's rigid approach towards Pakistan and the people of IOK continues to irk the Indo-Pak relations. India's absurd policy towards Pakistan has rather compelled Islamabad to resist, which faded the flexibility and goodwill towards New Delhi shown by it during the past ten years. An unresolved Kashmir issue is a historical fact, which cannot be sidelined and ignored for too long. Even a minor miscalculation by India, in pursuit of its foreign policy objectives for undermining Islamabad's will to resist, could put the entire region in trouble. India and the international community should, therefore, realise that none of the strategies other than 'dialogue' involving all the stakeholders would succeed in resolving the long pending issues including the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).*

**Keywords:** Pak-India Relations, Kashmir Issue, Brinksmanship, Lukewarm Relations, Coercive Policy, Miscalculation.

## **Introduction**

Despite having no direct or indirect role in the outcome of the incidents of 9/11, Pakistan was put under tremendous pressure. In this backdrop,

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## BJP's Kashmir Policy

Primarily, India's Kashmir policy remained consistent throughout the history. Irrespective of the party that remained in the power, India has never shown any flexibility to give the right to self-determination to the people of the IOK. However, the strategy used by the Congress to gain time had been different from that of the BJP. Yasir Masood writes, "the BJP is a right-leaning, Hindu nationalist party. It is the first major party to mobilise overtly on the basis of religious identity and to adopt a clearly anti-Muslim stance."<sup>15</sup> Despite the BJP's anti-Muslim stance, Atal Bihari Vajpayee was a very clear-headed politician, who wanted to take the peace process forward so as to end the permanent confrontation with Pakistan, said Amarjit Singh Daulat, the former Chief of India's intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).<sup>16</sup> Rekha Chowdhary, a former professor at University of Jammu, viewed that under the leadership of Vajpayee, the BJP took extraordinary steps to resume talks both with Pakistan and with Kashmiri separatists and put in place a number of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) including a 'free and fair' election. Muzamil Jaleel, the Kashmir Chief of Bureau for the *Indian Express*, is of the view that "despite the ideological position of the BJP, Vajpayee is remembered as one of the most dynamic Indian Prime Ministers in Kashmir."<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, during the 2004 election campaign, the BJP took a hard stance against Pakistan and Kashmiri separatists and went back to its original position of opposing Article 370 though, they lost the election.<sup>18</sup>

Regardless of the difficulties in managing the coalition government, Vajpayee drafted a better strategy to maintain peace in the region. Though Manmohan Singh, as the new Indian Prime Minister, was keen to take his policies forward, he failed because unlike Vajpayee, he could not get

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<sup>15</sup> Yasir Masood Khan, "The BJP's Track to Triumph: A Critical Analysis," *Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad*, vol. xxviii, no. 3 (2014): 13, [www.irs.org.pk/focus3-14.pdf](http://www.irs.org.pk/focus3-14.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Muzamil Jaleel, "Kashmir is in Pre-'96 Era, Narendra Modi is in the Best Position to Handle it: RAW Chief A S Daulat," *Indian Express*, July 12, 2015, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/kashmir-is-in-pre-96-era-narendra-modi-is-in-the-best-position-to-handle-it-2/#sthash.y6qHYJKE.dpuf>

<sup>17</sup> Rekha Chowdhary, "Modi's Roadmap for India's Kashmir and Pakistan Policies," *East Asia Forum*, May 16, 2014, [www.eastasiaforum.org/.../modis-roadmap-for-indias-kashmir-and-pakist...](http://www.eastasiaforum.org/.../modis-roadmap-for-indias-kashmir-and-pakist...),=

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

performance of the INC-led government, the hardened anti-Pakistan stance adopted by the BJP in its election campaign also played a significant role in its victory. Masood Khan writes that the BJP and Modi, as its central character, are considered the offspring of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).<sup>42</sup> By playing an anti-Muslim card successfully, Modi became a popular leader and got elected as the Chief Minister of Gujrat.<sup>43</sup> To maintain his popularity graph, he replicates the same strategy as the Prime Minister of India. As a result of his domestic policies, "Muslims are terrorised and other religious groups, too, as are secularists. The situation can only be called fascist," said Himani Bannerji.<sup>44</sup>

It is believed that in line with Modi's thinking, his team has been following an aggressive approach towards Pakistan, a strategy which is easily acceptable within the Indian society. Chowdhary explains the ideological position of the BJP based on "Cultural Nationalism, with an emphasis on the concepts of '*Hindutva*', 'territorial integrity' and 'unity with uniformities' and... is oppose asymmetrical federalism with any kind of constitutional exception for the state of Jammu and Kashmir."<sup>45</sup> Khan says, "*Hindutva* stands as the ideology and political philosophy of a group of militant anti-minority Hindu organisations."<sup>46</sup> The BJP is considered "as the parliamentary wing of a Hindu Nationalist Movement that has already succeeded in radically changing the Indian political culture for the worse." Party discourse even intends getting rid of the separate civil code for Muslims which to talk for a separate homeland for Kashmiris.<sup>47</sup> The BJP is reinforcing "this new national enterprise of unbridled neo-liberalism laced with religious-cultural ideology," said Bannerji.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Khan, "The BJP's Track to Triumph," 54.

<sup>43</sup> An interview with Bengali-Canadian writer, scholar and activist, Himani Bannerji, conducted by Salmaan Khan on "India and the Rise of Religious Nationalism – The BJP, Masculinity, Islamophobia and Neoliberal Politics, Violence and the Decline of the Left," August 21, 2014, 7 and 8, <https://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article34420>

<sup>44</sup> An interview with Himani Bannerji, 8 and 10.

<sup>45</sup> Chowdhary, "Modi's Roadmap for India's Kashmir and Pakistan Policies."

<sup>46</sup> Khan, "The BJP's Track to Triumph," 4.

<sup>47</sup> Syed and Haidar, ed., "Indo-Pak Relations."

<sup>48</sup> An interview with Himani Bannerji, 11.